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Article 1.

International Crisis Group

The Syrian Regime's Slow-motion Suicide

Executive Summary

13 Jul 2011 -- Desperate to survive at all costs, Syria's regime appears to be digging its grave. It did not have to be so. The protest movement is strong and getting stronger but yet to reach critical mass. Unlike toppled Arab leaders, President Bashar Assad enjoyed some genuine popularity. Many Syrians dread chaos and their nation's fragmentation. But whatever opportunity the regime once possessed is being jeopardised by its actions. Brutal repression has overshadowed belated, half-hearted reform suggestions; Bashar has squandered credibility; his regime has lost much of the legitimacy derived from its foreign policy. The international community, largely from fear of the alternative to the status quo, waits and watches, eschewing for now direct involvement. That is the right policy, as there is little to gain and much to lose from a more interventionist approach, but not necessarily for the right reasons. The Syrian people have proved remarkably resistant to sectarian or divisive tendencies, defying regime prophecies of confessional strife and Islamisation. That does not guarantee a stable, democratic future. But is a good start that deserves recognition and support.

Taken by surprise by the outbreak of unrest, the regime was lucky that protesters initially were unable to press their advantage. That gave the authorities time to regroup and put in place a multi-faceted response: stoking fear, especially among minorities; portraying demonstrators as foreign agents and armed Islamists; pledging limited reforms. Most of all, though, was brutal repression.

The violence that has ensued is clouded in some mystery. Crude propaganda from the regime and its policy of banning outside reporters has ensured this. Protesters claim they are entirely peaceful, but that assertion is hard to reconcile with witness testimony and with the vicious murder of several security officers. More plausibly, criminal networks, some armed Islamist groups, elements supported from outside and some demonstrators acting in self defence have taken up arms. But that is a marginal piece of the story. The vast majority of casualties have been peaceful protesters, and the vast majority of the violence has been perpetrated by the security services. The regime had a purpose. By sowing fear of instability, it sought to check the extent of popular mobilisation and deter the regime's less committed detractors. But while it appears to have had the desired impact on some Syrians, the balance sheet has been overwhelmingly negative from the authorities' standpoint. The security services' brutal and often erratic performance has created more problems than it has solved, as violence almost certainly has been the primary reason behind the protest movement's growth and radicalisation. As the crisis deepened, the regime gradually recognised the necessity of reform. Playing catch-up with protester demands, it always lagged one if not several steps behind, proposing measures that might have had some resonance if suggested earlier but fell on deaf ears by the time they were unveiled. This was particularly true of Bashar's most recent (20 June 2011) speech. His suggestions of far-reaching constitutional reforms, including the end of Baath party rule, encapsulated much of what the protest movement, at its inception, had dreamed. By then, however, demonstrators had turned to something else. It is not regime reform they are pursuing. It is regime change. What is more, by giving a relatively free hand to security forces, the regime has become increasingly dependent on and indebted to its more hardline elements. This has made it far less likely

that it ultimately will carry out what it has proposed; even assuming it truly wishes to.

Officials argue that many Syrians still see things differently, that they are wary of the protest movement, suspecting it is a Trojan horse for Islamists and that the fall of the regime would mean sectarian civil war. They have a point. Largely due to regime scare tactics – but also to some of the violence against security forces – the country has become more polarised. A growing number want to see the end of the regime; many still cling to it as better than an uncertain alternative, particularly in Damascus. The middle ground has been shrinking.

The result has been an apparent stalemate. Protesters gain ground but have yet to cross the crucial threshold that requires enlisting the capital. The regime scores some points by rallying its supporters, but the crisis of confidence with much of the population and loss of legitimacy is almost surely too deep to be overcome. But it would be wrong to bet on the status quo enduring indefinitely. Economic conditions are worsening; should they reach breaking point – a not unimaginable scenario by any means – the regime could well collapse. Predominantly Alawite security forces are overworked, underpaid and increasingly worried. Should they conclude that they ought to protect what still can be salvaged – their own villages – rather than try to defend what increasingly looks doomed – the existing power structure – their defection also would precipitate the end of the regime.

Under the circumstances, is there anything the international community can usefully do? Many commentators in the U.S. and Europe in particular believe so and are clamouring for a more muscular response. In truth, options are limited. Military intervention is highly unlikely; it also would be unquestionably disastrous. It could unleash the very sectarian civil war the international community wishes to avoid, provoke further instability in an already

unstable neighbourhood and be a gift to a regime that repeatedly has depicted the uprising as the work of foreign conspirators. Sanctions against regime officials can be of use, though this instrument almost has been exhausted; going further and targeting economic sectors that would hurt ordinary Syrians would backfire and risk a repeat of the unfortunate Iraqi precedent of the 1990s.

International condemnation is valuable insofar as it keeps the spotlight on – and potentially deters – human rights violations. In this respect the visits by Western ambassadors to Hama, where the prospect of major violence threatens, were welcome. But there are limits to what such steps can accomplish. To do what some are calling for (denounce the regime as illegitimate, insist that Bashar step down) are feel-good options that would change little. Ultimately, what matters is the judgment of the Syrian people; while many clearly wish to topple the regime, others have yet to reach that conclusion. A premature determination by the international community potentially could be viewed by those Syrians as undue interference in their affairs.

The world's cautious attitude has been a source of deep frustration and even anger for the protesters. That is entirely understandable, yet such caution might well be a blessing in disguise. The regime is unlikely to respond to international pressures, regardless of their provenance. Ultimately, the burden lies with the protesters to counter the regime's divisive tactics, reassure fellow citizens – and in particular members of minority groups – who remain worried about a successor regime, and build a political platform capable of rallying broad public support. Already their ability to transcend sectarian divides has confounded many observers. More importantly, it has given the lie to a regime that has made a business out of preying on fears of a chaotic or Islamist alternative to its own brutal reign.

Article 2.

The Washington Institute

Israel and Lebanon at Odds over Offshore Border

Simon Henderson

July 13, 2011 -- On July 10, Israel announced that it will soon submit a claim to the United Nations demarcating its maritime boundary with Lebanon. The announcement came a day after a Lebanese newspaper published a front-page story suggesting that Israel was claiming offshore exploration rights in Lebanese waters. Israel has already discovered substantial reserves of offshore natural gas, setting the scene for fractious disputes over land and sea borders. Such disputes could even put Israeli offshore installations at risk of attack by Hizballah, a group that has access to Iranian missiles and is now part of the Lebanese government.

Territorial Waters and Exclusive Economic Zones

The latest row between Israel and Lebanon stems from differing notions of the criteria by which their maritime border should be drawn, which until the hydrocarbon discoveries had not been a particular issue. Lebanon has not yet begun looking for natural gas offshore, but it has agreed on, though not ratified, a maritime line with the island of Cyprus. Beirut has also reportedly sent the UN a map illustrating its view of where the Israel-Lebanon maritime border lies. Israel is now doing the same.

Over the years, various international arguments over fishing rights and offshore oil led to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea permitting exclusive economic zones (EEZs). Specifically, countries could claim maritime borders extending 200 nautical miles from the

low-water mark on their coasts. For countries with less than 400 nautical miles separating them, the convention offers additional principles for drawing agreed-on maritime boundaries. Israel and Cyprus reached such an agreement last year, encouraging further exploration of recent and substantial gas findings in Israel's EEZ. Cyprus likely has large gas deposits in its EEZ as well.

Law of the Sea

The main Law of the Sea principle by which maritime borders are drawn between two adjacent coastal states is the notion of "baselines," or straight lines that run along the coast. Once this principle is applied, the border is drawn equidistantly from points along the coasts. In the case of Israel and Lebanon, this approach produces a border extending from the coast at approximately 300 degrees, or slightly below northwest. Although Lebanon has not revealed its official view, an Israeli newspaper has produced a map claiming the Lebanese line runs at 292 degrees. Arab media reports seem to suggest the line's bearing should be 270 degrees -- that is, directly west, continuing the rough line of the assumed land border between the two countries.

An Israeli official view of the maritime line is suggested on a map depicting recent government petroleum leases and licenses, as posted on the Ministry of National Infrastructures website. The Lebanese paper al-Safir featured a map very similar to this on its July 9 front page, alongside a story claiming that Lebanon would defend its borders.

In addition to the lack of diplomatic relations between the two countries, negotiating a maritime border could be complicated by disagreements on where their land border lies. Yet such differences might not amount to much, given that any land disputes at the border point nearest the coast -- known as Ras Naqoura in Arabic and Rosh Hanikra in Hebrew -- can probably be measured in yards, if not feet.

In Israel's potential favor, a line of small reefs and rocky islands (viewable on Google Earth) lies several hundred yards offshore between the northern Israeli city of Nahariya and Ras Naqoura/Rosh Hanikra. According to Law of the Sea conventions, such islands could be considered the baseline for calculating the maritime border. If so, this would shift Israel's EEZ even further northwest into what Lebanon currently regards as its own waters.

Of course, the legal situation may be further complicated by the fact that Israel has not yet signed the Law of the Sea treaty. Other potentially relevant nonsignatories include Syria and Turkey; the United States has signed but not ratified it.

Cyprus in an Unenviable Position

The Cypriot government, having negotiated maritime boundaries with both Israel and Lebanon, now finds itself a potential party in a nasty diplomatic squabble. Israeli officials argue that the northern point of the Israel-Cyprus maritime border is exactly the same as the southern point of the Lebanon-Cyprus agreement, suggesting that Lebanese negotiators implicitly recognized Israel's view of the line between the Lebanese and Israeli EEZs. That would fit a pattern seen in certain other international disputes regarding offshore oil and gas development, in which the parties refuse to abandon their claims but work out a way for each side to develop resources.

This implied recognition of Israel's EEZ could hamper or even scuttle Lebanese parliamentary ratification of the agreement with Cyprus. Yet the main reason for the legislative delay appears to be Lebanon's reluctance to annoy Turkey, which believes it has a crucial interest in the island's decisions. This belief dates from 1974, when Ankara ordered the invasion of Cyprus in order to protect the Turkish-speaking minority. Several thousand Turkish soldiers still occupy positions in the northern part of the island. Indeed, Ankara has

already condemned the Cyprus-Israel agreement, although both Nicosia and Israel have apparently ignored these comments.

Israel's Growing Gas Riches

The strong and even bellicose statements coming out of Lebanon are unlikely to halt Israel's development of recently discovered natural gas deposits. Its giant Leviathan field -- the largest offshore gas discovery in the world last year, slated for export purposes -- lies in Blocks 349 and 350, south of Lebanon's reportedly claimed line. The Tamar field, intended for domestic consumption, lies similarly well south. Currently estimated at around 750 billion cubic meters, Israel's total natural gas reserves could prove double that figure, not to mention potential oil findings. The country's current consumption is around 4 bcm per year, so the newfound reserves should expand its domestic use while still giving it a considerable surplus for export. A short-term hiccup in Israel's plans is the increasing vulnerability of gas imports from Egypt due to recurring sabotage of the Sinai pipeline. Its current domestic supplies -- obtained from the Mari-B field off Ashkelon -- will be depleted before the Tamar field starts production, so long-term interruption of Egyptian supplies could prove problematic. In the meantime, Israel has plans in place for using the small Noagas field and mooring a floating regasification plant off the coast so that it can import liquefied natural gas.

U.S. Role

Despite the recent rhetoric from Israel and Lebanon, open hostilities over offshore gas seem unlikely. Israel would no doubt react strongly to any attack on an offshore platform, and the gas supplies themselves are probably invulnerable. Once in production, the gas will flow through pipelines on the seabed running to shore -- there is no visible surface indication of the fields' location, and the depth of the sea (more than a thousand feet) would inhibit any sabotage attempts.

Nevertheless, Washington has an important role to play in ensuring that the prospective economic bonanza in the eastern Mediterranean does not become a fresh reason for war. Washington should reemphasize to Israel, Lebanon, Cyprus, and Turkey that developing offshore discoveries could be a win-win proposition for all the countries of the region, since geological evidence suggests that gas and oil reserves are widespread. The United States should also use its good offices to work out quiet understandings that allow exploration to proceed despite continuing border disputes.

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Article 3.

TIME

Who's Behind Mumbai's Rush-Hour Bombings?

Jyoti Thottam

Jul. 14, 2011 -- New Delhi -- The bombs went off today just as most of Mumbai was ending work. At 6:45 p.m., Janardhan Bedkar, 35, an office helper at a diamond showroom in Opera House district, went on an errand for his boss, picking up a packet from a nearby paan shop, which sells various types of India's equivalent of chewing tobacco. As he stood at a roadside paan shop, the area around him was buzzing with activity, as is usual for the business district at that time of evening, when offices are beginning to close for the day and people are heading home. Nearby, at a cart selling grilled sandwiches, he was watching a pregnant woman sharing a bite with a friend. Suddenly, he heard a deafening noise and saw carts around him flying. "Next thing I knew, I was lying prone some meters away from where I had been. The paan shop and everything else was wrecked, their remains lying scattered all over. As I took to my feet and ran desperately to get away, I saw the pregnant woman crushed under dozens of feet as people tried to run away. I don't think she would've survived. There was a stampede as people ran helter-skelter, not sure where to go."

Mumbai has been hit by three serial blasts tonight, during rush hour in heavily populated areas. Home Minister P. Chidambaram gave a press conference at 9 p.m. local time confirming 10 people dead and 54 admitted to the hospital with injuries. The number of injured could be higher, he said, and the death toll also could rise.

Maharashtra state officials are reporting different numbers — the

chief minister told the local television channel CNN-IBN there were 13 dead and 80 injured. A survey of local hospitals late Wednesday by TIME indicated 19 fatalities.

The Home Ministry has confirmed only the obvious — that this was a terrorist attack — a coordinated serial bomb blast but there was no word yet on who might be responsible and whether the blasts bears the imprint of local or foreign sources. Terror attack is a loosely defined term in India, encompassing everything from the Mumbai underworld to an as-yet-undefined grouping called "Indian Mujahideen" to the much more organized and deadly Pakistan-based militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba, whom Indian and U.S. authorities blame for the 2008 Mumbai attacks. In separate statements, both U.S. President Barack Obama and Indian Congress Party chairman Sonia Gandhi condemned the attacks; Obama indicated that the U.S. would cooperate with India's search for the perpetrators.

On its face, the incident looks much more like the serial blasts that hit Mumbai in 2006 and in 1993 than the infamous three-day-long terror attacks of 2008. As in those earlier incidents, the bombs were planted and detonated surreptitiously — one television channel showed images of a forensic investigator picking through the remains of a tiffin box, the ubiquitous stainless steel lunch container that might have been used as a container for an IED. In 2006, the explosives were packed into pressure-cookers. This time, Chidambaram said one of the bombs was planted inside a car, the other on a motorcycle. Other unconfirmed reports said one of the bombs was planted on top of an electric meter. The Mumbai siege of 2008, on the other hand, was conducted by a team of heavily armed commandos on a suicide mission, a very different kind of attack requiring a much greater level of training, planning and logistical sophistication.

In the current incident, the Opera House bomb was believed to be the worst of the three. But the other two were destructive as well. The

bomb in Dadar was set off in an area known as Kabutar Khana, named for its central landmark, a pigeon house established by Mumbai's Jain community, who are known for their strict vegetarianism. The bomb exploded inside a Maruti Esteem sedan, which was parked near a bus stop, one of the new all metal structures that have come up in India's cities as they improve their infrastructure. The bus stop was bent into pieces with the force of the blast, and the impact caused at least three injuries. Metal, glass and some lemons from a vendor's cart were scattered all over, in an area that is so crowded in the evenings that it's hard to move through the sea of life. An eyewitness to the blast in Dadar, a retired man named Jayantilal Shah, 68, says he was in his one-room flat in one of Mumbai's chawls, or traditional tenement houses, waiting for a phone call when he heard the explosion. The doors opened, the ceiling cracked and all the ground floor windows in his building were broken with the force of it. He went out to look and saw injured people crying, and the remains of the grey Maruti.

Dadar and Zaveri Bazaar, a bustling jewelry market that was the site of the third explosion today, were also targeted during the 1993 Mumbai blasts. What ties all these spots together is that they are packed with people, ordinary Mumbaikars. Zaveri Bazaar and Kabutar Khana in particular are also associated with the powerful local Gujarati and Marwari business communities. That is very different from the 2008 attack, which singled out places popular with foreign tourists and the wealthy elite. Similar targets, though, don't necessarily imply a similar source. The 1993 blasts were all linked to Dawood Ibrahim, the reputed kingpin of the Mumbai underworld "D-company," who is believed to have links with jihadist groups operating in South Asia and the Persian Gulf. However, Ibrahim has never targeted Mumbai's merchants, and he has been outside of Mumbai for years. The Indian Mujahideen, a group that has never

been clearly defined, have typically sent email messages claiming responsibility for attacks. That was their modus operandi in 2007 and 2008, after serial bomb blasts in several cities, including Ahmedabad, Bangalore and Jaipur. There was no email known to have been sent today.

There have been other attacks since the vicious Nov. 26, 2008 attack on Mumbai. Last year witnessed three such incidents: in Pune, Delhi and Varanasi. Responsibility for those attacks has not been clearly established, but their targets are similar to those in Mumbai 2008: the German Bakery in Pune, a popular hangout for foreigners visiting a nearby ashram; a tourist bus visiting the historic Jama Masjid in Old Delhi; and in India's holiest city, a bathing ghat popular with foreign tourists. Indian authorities also filed charges against 24 people recently, charging them with trying to recruit people from the large Muslim communities of south India, particularly Kerala and Hyderabad, into the global jihad.

It isn't just coincidence, then, that a team from the National Investigation Agency was already in Mumbai investigating another case when news of the serial blasts broke. The NIA was created in response to India's widely criticized intelligence failures in the Nov. 26 attack. Chidambaram said NIA officials have started their investigation of today's attack. The National Security Guard, meanwhile, were the commandos who arrived belatedly but did eventually put down the Mumbai rampage. That group established a hub in Mumbai so they could respond more rapidly to an attack (a big criticism of their performance in 2008), and that's exactly what they did when the latest blasts hit, moving in immediately. Other teams and post-blast investigators from Delhi and Hyderabad were also quickly en route. This may not be a repeat of Mumbai 2008, but it's clear that some of those lessons have been learned.

Article 4.

Foreign Policy

Palestine's disillusioned youth activists

Rachel Shabi

JULY 13, 2011 -- U.S. President Barack Obama said he believed a Palestinian state could be created by September 2011. Speaking to the U.N. General Assembly in September 2010, he laid down a challenge to formulate an agreement that would make it a reality. That same deadline was set by Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad for his state-building plan, which was intended to create the institutions for a viable Palestinian state. But U.S.-brokered negotiations have been a miserable failure, and September is now fast approaching. Palestinian leaders have declared their intention to push for recognition in the U.N. General Assembly, where they can expect overwhelming support. The United States is expected to block the move in the Security Council -- and, of course, Israel will not alter its policies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip because of a U.N. resolution.

Now, with the Palestinian dream of statehood stymied at every turn, a new generation of activists are adopting fresh tactics to win their rights.

"September is a moment of truth for us," says Diana Alzeer, a 23-year-old social activist from Ramallah who cites the revolution in Egypt as inspiration. "We see that a dictatorship of over 30 years was gone in two weeks. So why not for Palestinians?"

Alzeer is part of a network of global Palestinian activists that form the "March15" movement -- named for the date when thousands took to the streets of Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem to call for Fatah and Hamas, the two dominant Palestinian parties, to end their bitter division. But the movement also proves that the Palestinian street is

growing disillusioned with its long-dominant political factions. "That's the big difference now," says Alzeer. "We are not led by parties. Most of us don't belong to any."

March15 is a loose network of young, social media-friendly activists organizing globally and injecting new life into the Palestinian popular struggle. Healing political divisions is one step on the path of creating a united, non-violent protest movement, they believe.

Another goal on that same path, some activists say, is to resuscitate the PLO's legislative body, the Palestinian National Council -- and allow all Palestinians, regardless of geography, to elect representatives. And for some, the idea of pursuing a Palestinian state through asymmetric negotiation with Israel is simply outdated.

"What's the use of state if you can't have the political rights that go with it?" asks Fadi Quran, a 23-year-old coordinator of Palestinian youth groups in Ramallah. "The demands of the new movement that is slowly but surely beginning to surface are freedom, justice and dignity -- that both Palestinians and Israelis should have the same opportunities and the same rights, as equals."

This year also marks the 20-year mark of the start of the peace process between Palestinians and Israelis in Madrid in 1991 and led to the landmark Oslo Accords -- a process that, in all that time, has yielded few results. Those Palestinians who have grown up in the "Oslo years" have grown deeply cynical as the peace process faltered and failed to deliver. And Obama's spectacular climb-down last year over Israel enforcing a freeze on settlement expansion was, for many, the final nail in the coffin of a negotiated solution.

Young Palestinians now see more hope in the democracy movements sweeping the region, and draw parallels in their opposition to corrupt, unrepresentative politics and a stifling lack of opportunity. "This whole generation in the Arab world is more educated and its main

goal has been to break away from the older generation and create something new for themselves," Quran says.

This sentiment is borne out in public opinion surveys. Though Palestinian national sentiment is notoriously difficult to measure, the Norwegian research firm FAFO recently found that Palestinians believed corruption had increased significantly over the past three years. What's more, FAFO discovered that support for both Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh have slumped in 2011.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian push for statehood at the United Nations may not get many cheers on the ground. Quran argued that, even if successful, a U.N. statehood seal would be no more than a moral victory. "There will be no full sovereignty, no contiguous land, no Palestinian control over large swathes of the Palestinian population -- nothing that you need to be state," he says. "If there is a huge fuss and a declaration of statehood, a lot of Palestinians will say it is a big joke and that we are sick of people playing with our destiny."

The shift among some protesters, from statehood to equal rights, has also put women center-stage. They are increasingly leading the Friday afternoon marches against the Israeli separation barrier and Jewish settlements in the West Bank. A small group of active Palestinian women focused on such protests say they take regular inquiries from new female activists, inspired by images of young Palestinian women facing down Israeli soldiers. They also explain that they earned their protest stripes during the March 15 demonstrations in Ramallah, when they formed human shields around male activists, taking the blows from security officials who at first attacked, later defended, and finally joined them

"These are guys who would usually never listen to a woman and her opinions but now they are with us, working together," says Lina, a 27-year-old woman from East Jerusalem.

For her, it's all in line with the new goals of the movement. "It is about complete, dynamic change, rather than the same people running the system," she says. "This is not about territory any more, but about rights -- and the same rights for women."

Already, this movement has altered the format of Palestinian protest movements. On May 15, March15 was involved with coordinating border protests of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and Syria, linking those to simultaneous demonstrations in the West Bank and Gaza. The striking display of unified protest marked Nakba Day, the Palestinian commemoration of their displacement in the war that created Israel.

At least 14 people were killed and hundreds injured as Israeli forces opened fire on these mass protests - Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas declared a three-day mourning period for those killed. But the March15 movement had made its mark. As Nazareth-based journalist Jonathan Cook pointed out in an article for The National, "the scenes of Palestinian defiance on Israel's borders will fuel the imaginations of Palestinians everywhere."

Quran argues that the unity of the protest movement is an antidote to the current politics of division. "We thought it would take longer to convince Palestinian youth from different locations around the world to get together," he says. "But all we had to do was get in touch with them."

Activists predict more change is coming. "Non-violent protest won't be political activities or just about the [Israeli separation] wall or settlements," says Sami Awad, director of the Holy Land trust, a Bethlehem-based, non-profit organisation that works on Palestinian community building. "We want to expose the inequalities that Palestinians face -- from water distribution to education to movement and freedom of worship."

This is not about giving up on Palestinian statehood entirely, but rather a strategic decision to put it on pause. "Until the equal rights of Palestinians are recognised, we will not be able to find a political solution," says Awad. "For now, that can wait."

Rachel Shabi is author of Not the Enemy -- Israel's Jews from Arab Lands.

Article 5.

The Washington Post

The rise and fall of Iran's Ahmadinejad

Karim Sadjadpour

July 14 -- While Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's demagoguery and Holocaust revisionism on the world stage have earned him alarmist comparisons to Adolf Hitler, his recent, ignoble fall from grace reveals the Iranian president for what he really is: the dispensable sword of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The marriage of Khamenei and Ahmadinejad should be understood in the context of Iran's internal rivalries. Since the death in 1989 of the revolution's father, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini — whose austere nature and anti-Americanism set the tenor for Iran's post-monarchic order — Tehran's political elite has been broadly divided into two schools.

Reformists and pragmatists argued that ensuring the Islamic Republic's survival required easing political and social restrictions and prioritizing economic expediency over ideology. Hard-liners, led by Khamenei, believed that compromising on revolutionary ideals could unravel the system, just as perestroika did the Soviet Union. Given the youthful Iranian public's desire for change, Khamenei seemed to have lost the war of ideas by the early 2000s.

No one anticipated that his saving grace would arrive in the person of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the hitherto unknown mayor of Tehran. Ahmadinejad's pious populism resonated among Iran's working classes, and his revolutionary zeal and willingness to attack Khamenei's adversaries endeared him to the supreme leader, whose backing of Ahmadinejad in the 2005 presidential election proved decisive. The balance of power between the two was exhibited during

Ahmadinejad's inauguration, when the new president prostrated himself before Khamenei and kissed his hand.

Under the supreme leader's approving gaze, Ahmadinejad's first term as president was spent bludgeoning Khamenei's domestic opponents, taking a hard line on the nuclear issue and taunting the United States. Ahmadinejad's newfound fame abroad, however, confused his true position at home.

What Khamenei failed to realize was that Ahmadinejad and his cohorts had greater ambitions than simply being his minions.

They spoke of their direct connection to the hidden imam — Shiite Islam's Messiah equivalent — in an attempt to render the clergy obsolete. In "private" meetings — which were bugged by intelligence forces loyal to Khamenei — Ahmadinejad's closest adviser, Rahim Mashaei, spoke openly of designs to supplant the clergy. The last straw came earlier this year, when Ahmadinejad tried to take over the Ministry of Intelligence, whose vast files on the financial and moral corruption of Iran's political elite are powerful tools of political persuasion and blackmail.

The supreme leader was publicly nonchalant about Ahmadinejad's insubordination; privately, however, he unleashed jackals that had long been salivating for the president's comeuppance. The powerful Revolutionary Guards — who helped engineer Ahmadinejad's contested 2009 reelection — swiftly declared their devotion to Khamenei, and several of the president's advisers were arrested.

One former Guard and current member of parliament, Mohammad Karamirad, sent Ahmadinejad a message last week in the form of a macabre Persian proverb: "If [Khamenei] asks us to bring him a hat, we know what to bring him," i.e., the head of the person wearing the hat.

In addition to proving the primacy of Iran's supreme leader, the rise and fall of Ahmadinejad exemplifies the contempt that Tehran's ruling cartel has for the intelligence of its citizenry.

Ahmadinejad's tainted reelection — which spurred millions to take to the streets — was hailed by Khamenei as a “divine assessment” and the people’s will. Two years later, Ahmadinejad and his cronies are accused by former supporters of being “deviant Zionist agents” and “possessed by the devil.”

Khamenei’s desire to project a unified front to the world is likely to keep Ahmadinejad in office until his term expires in 2013. Khamenei seeks to wield power without accountability; this requires a president who has accountability without power. A disgraced Ahmadinejad can conveniently absorb blame for the country’s endemic economic, political and social disaffection.

For Washington, the best outcome of Iran’s conservative fratricide is only that the fight continues. Authoritarian collapses tend to have three prerequisites: grass-roots protests, fissures among the elite and a regime’s loss of will to use sustained brutality to retain power. While Iran has the first two, the regime remains quite willing to rule by terror.

And while the regime has been weakened, Iran’s opposition is unlikely to deliver democracy anytime soon. In contrast to Arab opposition movements that lack clear leadership but have a common goal — to bring down their respective regimes — the beleaguered, revolution-weary Iranian opposition has symbolic leadership — Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, both of whom are under house arrest — but lacks a clear consensus on its goals.

Instead of waiting in vain for the regime’s will to soften or for the opposition to reconfigure, the United States can aid the cause of democracy and open society in Iran by focusing on tearing down the information and communication barriers the regime has erected.

Technological aid and infrastructure for better Internet and satellite communications would allow Iran's democracy activists to stay connected with one another and show the outside world what's happening in their country.

By accentuating the country's internal rifts and breaking previously sacred taboos — such as challenging the supreme leader — Ahmadinejad has become an unlikely, unwitting ally of Iran's democracy movement. Once thought to be leading the Islamic Republic's rise, he is more likely to be remembered by historians as the man who hastened its decay.

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Article 6.

Foreign Policy Research Institute

Russia's Anxieties About The Arab Revolution

Stephen Blank

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By June 2011, the Arab revolutions had evolved into a series of disconnected but increasingly violent civil wars—particularly in Libya and Syria. The international community has certainly not been spared the effects of these wars. As a long-time patron—if not an ally—of these states, Russia views these trends with mounting anxiety. These revolutions and civil wars pose three serious challenges or even threats to Russia.

Fear Of Domestic Unrest

Domestically, the revolutions could inspire citizens to take autonomous political action against the regime. Alternatively, they could further inflame the insurgency in the North Caucasus among a largely Muslim population to which Russia is already dedicating approximately 250,000 regular army and Ministry of Interior forces. Meanwhile, Moscow clearly has no effective strategy for quelling this violence or for resolving this insurgency by political means.

Russian domestic and external braggadocio is intended in part to hide the regime's fears of domestic unrest. Russian officials believe and publicly profess that since 2003 the United States has been trying to foment democracy campaigns in Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to undermine existing regimes there.

Accordingly, they continue to promote the image of Russia as a besieged fortress surrounded by linked enemies, foreign governments and democratic reformers. Thus, President Dmitry Medvedev said, in March 2011:

Look at the current situation in the Middle East and the Arab world. It is extremely difficult and great problems still lie ahead. In some cases it may even come to the disintegration of large, heavily populated states, their break-up into smaller fragments. The character of these states is far from straightforward. It may come to very complex events, including the arrival of fanatics into power. This will mean decades of fires and further spread of extremism. We must face the truth. In the past such a scenario was harbored for us, and now attempts to implement it are even more likely. In any case, this plot will not work. But everything that happens there will have a direct impact on our domestic situation in the long term, as long as decades. While Moscow does not attribute the Arab revolutions to outside forces, it believes that those forces could exploit their example to incite an increasingly dissatisfied populace. In response to the color revolutions of 2003-2005, Moscow has terminated elections of governors, passed increasingly draconian laws suppressing freedom of the press, assembly, speech, and the dissemination of information, and has created thousands of Paramilitary units whose primary mission is to suppress any manifestation of public unrest and autonomous political action. Dissidents and journalists have been jailed, beaten, and sometimes killed. Vladimir Putin has even revived Leonid Brezhnev's notorious practice of putting dissidents into psychiatric institutions. According to journalist Andrei Soldatov, Russia is also working to prevent a "Facebook Revolution" by proposing that the owners of online social media be responsible for all content posted on their websites. Despite the regime's habitual public swagger, these policies betray a government deeply afraid of

its own people. An April 2009 report outlined the threat perceived by the authorities quite clearly. Specifically it stated:

The Russian intelligence community is seriously worried about latent social processes capable of leading to the beginning of civil wars and conflicts on RF [Russian Federation] territory that can end up in a disruption of territorial integrity and the appearance of a large number of new sovereign powers. Data of an information “leak,” the statistics and massive number of antigovernment actions, and official statements and appeals of the opposition attest to this.

This report proceeded to say that these agencies expected massive protests in the Moscow area, industrial areas of the South Urals and Western Siberia and in the Far East, while ethnic tension among the Muslims of the North Caucasus and Volga-Ural areas was also not excluded. The proliferation of the Arab “virus” would be the Kremlin’s worst nightmare.

Fear Of Revolution Spreading To Central Asia

Russia’s second source of anxiety lies in the possibility that Arab revolutions might spread to Central Asia. Russian elites regard this area as particularly vulnerable to upheaval from both within and without, especially if the Taliban were to prevail in Afghanistan. On June 14, President Medvedev, speaking in Tashkent, made clear that these revolutions concern Russia and its Central Asian partners.

Indeed, by April it was clear to Moscow that dangerous pressure was building up in these states. When the Duma held public hearings about the possibility of these revolutions spreading to Central Asia, Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin, on April 13, publicly urged these states to make timely reforms lest they be swept away like Tunisia and Egypt. Russia is seeking stability because it will prevent these other states from drawing closer. To achieve this, Karasin has recommended the formation of a civil society with the intention of establishing international and inter-religious peace, leaders’

heightened responsibility for raising the population's standard of living, and the development of education and work with youth. However, this limited program cannot overcome the results of profound misrule, corruption, and stunted economic development. Additionally, there has been no mention of economic development, freedom, or genuine political reform. Clearly, Russia is only willing to tolerate cosmetic reforms, and it is doubtful that Central Asian leaders will even reach those limits.

Indeed, these leaders are quite unwilling to countenance genuine reforms and their responses to the Arab revolutions have been dismissive. Kazakhstan's President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, initiated an instant election rather than a palpably stage-managed referendum to give him life tenure because the latter would have been too egregious in today's climate. Meanwhile in Uzbekistan, already a draconian state in many ways, we see a further crackdown on mobile Internet media. News blackouts are becoming frequent occurrences in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan; all across Central Asia, government agencies continue to deny the possibility of revolution. Subsequently, Uzbek President Islam Karimov stated that these revolutions were externally instigated by states who covet Central Asian resources, though he would not specifically identify them. Tajikistan's President, Emomali Rahmon, told his Parliament on April 20, 2011: Much has been said and written about the possibility of the repetition of such events in Central Asia, [---] "I want to reiterate that the wise people of Tajikistan, who were once the victims of such events, know the meaning of peace and stability. They are aware of the importance of peace and stability. [---] They have gone through civil wars; therefore, they reject military solutions to any problem. Similarly, Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov recently said that the abundance of goods at domestic markets, especially food, and cheap prices are key indicators of progress and

stability. While governments in the region are doing their best to leave nothing to chance, they are not reforming themselves. These regimes are whistling in the wind and have good reason for anxiety. Large demonstrations are now occurring in Azerbaijan, where unrest in response to the regime's crackdown on dissent and Islamic agitation has been growing since late 2010.

Russia's Concern About Libya

Russia's third source of anxiety pertains to NATO's operation to support Libya's insurgents and to the possibility of deepening involvement there—and even more so in Syria. NATO's actions and the ongoing civil strife place several Russian interests in these countries at risk. Russia already stands to lose, by its own account, \$4.5 billion in arms deals with Libya and that figure excludes Syria. Those arms sales not only benefit defense industry, but also Russian leaders who habitually pocket the proceeds from arms sales for their private "slush funds." Beyond that, Libya has also reportedly offered Russia a naval base in Benghazi while Syria has offered Moscow a naval base at Tartus. These events suggest that in return for arms sales host states are being pressured to give Moscow access to foreign bases. We have also seen this in Latin America. Moreover, Russia might still be supplying weapons covertly to Libya through Belarus, a habitual conduit of weapons to places where Russia wishes to retain deniability, since Libya has recently asked Belarus for more weapons. Syria's importance as a buyer of Russian arms, often paid for by Saudi or Iranian subsidies to Syria, is of a comparable economic and strategic magnitude.

Second, Libya is important to Russia's energy strategy. Just before the Libyan revolution, Russia signed an asset-swapping deal with ENI, Italy's state energy company, to obtain half of ENI's stake of 66 percent of Libya's Elephant oilfield with 700 million recoverable barrels of oil. In exchange, ENI will be allowed to take part in

projects to develop northwest Siberian assets owned by the Arctic Gas company. Specifically ENI and Gazprom agreed to finalize a contract for the sale of gas from these fields in Siberia that will be produced by a joint Russo-Italian company called SeverEnergia (Northern Energy). This deal comports with Russia's twin objectives of: 1) ensconcing itself in North African gas supply networks to surround and put more pressure on Europe to deal with Russian gas suppliers and 2) obtaining foreign equity ownership investment without overly intrusive conditions like majority equity ownership in Russia's Siberian and Far Eastern energy projects. Presumably, in this case, there is a trade so if the Libyan project were to fall through due to the success of the revolutionaries, ENI might have to pull out of the Siberian project.

Therefore, the implications of maintaining a Russian gas stake in Libya and the broader North African scene possess considerable economic and geopolitical importance. In sum, Russia clearly cannot gain decisive leverage upon European gas supplies unless it gains major equity in North African, i.e. Libyan and Algerian fields. Lukoil already holds stakes in Egypt, Tatneft is in Libya, and Gazprom is in Algeria while Gazprom, as shown below, is primed to move as well into Libya. Moscow also clearly wants BP's assets in Algeria and in the Caspian Basin. TNK-BP announced in October 2010 its interests in BP's Algerian holdings worth \$3 billion. President Medvedev also proposed buying these holdings during his 2010 state visit to Algeria. TNK-BP even offered assets to Sonatrach, Algeria's national gas company, in exchange for these BP assets. BP may also have asked Algeria and Sonatrach to cooperate with Russia. Beyond those BP assets in Algeria, Gazprom plans to participate in new tenders to develop gas fields there. Despite an initial interest in cooperating with Russian firms, Algeria and Sonatrach reversed course and decided to resist Russia. Russia's interest in acquiring Algerian

energy assets is quite straightforward. Whatever leverage it gains in Algerian oil and gas can be used to encircle Europe since Moscow expects Western demand for gas will return to 2007-8 levels. But Moscow also needs foreign assets like these fields in North Africa for critical domestic economic purposes to shore up Gazprom's bottom line. Moscow must now reckon with stagnant, if not declining, demand in Western Europe and the arrival of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and shale gas where it cannot compete. These challenges cause Moscow to doggedly pursue its earlier strategy. Furthermore, the prospect of higher domestic energy taxes also drives Gazprom to seek more foreign assets rather than reform its domestic operations. On the other hand, the unrest in Libya has had a major silver lining for Moscow. The general sense of turbulence throughout the Persian Gulf has caused oil prices to spike to over \$100 per barrel unit (bbl).

This windfall simultaneously plays a key role in Russian domestic politics. As Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin has stated, Russia's budget is in deficit if oil prices fall below \$120/bbl. Consequently this windfall relieves pressure on the budget. But more importantly, for all those who, like Putin, cling to the idea of an energy powerhouse, but an essentially unreformed economy (and political system), this windfall obviates any demand to undertake the reforms needed to modernize the political and economic system. Medvedev has talked but failed to deliver here. Since it provides an illusion of prosperity and stability, popular and elite pressures for reform are tranquilized as long as panic and speculation dominate global energy markets. Third, in foreign policy, instability in the Gulf and North Africa seemingly allows Russian leaders like Prime Minister Putin, to tell Europe that it should make deals with Russia because Russia supposedly is a stable predictable supplier without whom Europe cannot manage. Needless to say, this is ultimately a geopolitical

argument, although it includes economics, for strengthening Russia's clout over Europe. Thus, Russia's energy strategy aims not only to reduce pressure for domestic reform, it also is the critical instrument by which Russia seeks to dominate the CIS and gain enduring leverage in Europe. Failures in either foreign policy theater immediately reverberate in Russian domestic politics and economics. Another reason for Russian opposition to intervention lies in the fact that Russia has consistently tried to restrict the U.S. use of force so that Washington must get approval from the UN Security Council where Russia has a veto. Invoking the UN as the supreme and exclusive arbiter of the use of force for the United States has been a systematic plank in Russian foreign policy for over a decade. If the United States and Europe showed that they did not need a UN approval (which, in any case, Moscow and Beijing would veto), this would demonstrate Washington's effective—and even successful—disregard for Russia to the world, with a corresponding blow to Russian status, prestige, and real influence in the Middle East and beyond. Therefore, continuation or worse, extension and prolongation, of this operation would only confirm Russian fears that Washington and NATO are unpredictable actors who are not bound by consideration of Russian interests, international law, or anything other than their own sense of their values. These values, which remain quite inexplicable to Russian leaders, are often indistinguishable and unnecessarily complex in the conduct of relations with the West. Moreover, Western leaders could one day claim the lack of democracy in Russia or the CIS as a pretext for intervention. Russia, like China, wants to conduct a "values-free" foreign policy with the United States and Europe in the manner of eighteenth or nineteenth century cabinet diplomacy where states could do as they please domestically. Thus, for example, Russia simultaneously published atrocity stories about NATO's conduct

while seeking to persuade NATO and Muammar Qaddafi that it can be a reliable mediator in this operation. Such maneuvers represent the acme of tactical flexibility that Moscow prides itself on possessing. Finally, NATO's Libyan operation presents Russia with multiple geopolitical risks. Once again Moscow believes that NATO, backed by Washington, has usurped the clear meaning of a UN resolution to intervene unilaterally in a civil war on behalf of forces opposing Russia's client or partner and to impose democracy by force. Russia also worries that this could lead (as may well happen) to a prolonged stalemate that could further inflame its and its neighbors' restive Muslim populations and the entire Middle East. Second, the potential victory of these revolutionary forces and NATO could lead them to ratchet up similar pressure on Syria and use Libya as a precedent for intervening there. Third, if the Libyan and Syrian revolutionaries were to win, such a victory could lead them to look to NATO, not Moscow, in the future. This would result in strengthening the Western presence in the Middle East and allowing NATO to consolidate the area unilaterally. That would constitute a clear defeat of Moscow's long-standing geopolitical objective of not letting the United States and/or NATO unilaterally organize the Middle East. Then Moscow would face regional marginalization, as well as another successful NATO unilateral precedent in coercive diplomacy. All these considerations came together when Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov met Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi in Moscow on May 6, 2011. They announced their grave concern over Middle Eastern events. Furthermore, they would now coordinate actions to bring about a "speedy stabilization" of the situation and prevent negative unpredictable consequences. Specifically, they adhere to the principle that peoples should be free to arrange their affairs as they see fit without outside interference. They both see the UN Contact Group as having grossly overstepped its authority and as now being

in favor of a NATO ground operation, thus usurping the Security Council's formal role. They called for a peaceful settlement and no foreign intervention, which means Qaddafi stays in power. This coordination will undoubtedly spread to questions concerning reform in Central Asia even though Moscow, as noted earlier, would like to see cautious reforms.

Yet within weeks, Moscow offered to mediate between Qaddafi and the rebels. It did so because much as it fears prolonged strife in Libya, it fears marginalization and NATO's victory even more. Therefore, despite the agreement with China, it quickly reversed course lest it be isolated vis-à-vis NATO and regionally. Moscow's maneuvers betray weakness despite its public posturing. Its advice to Libya, Yemen, Syria, and Central Asia to institute moderate reforms was utterly disregarded yet it upholds these regimes even though they depend, as Syria's Foreign Minister Walid Muallem, said, on Russia. Their propensity to murder their citizens has apparently not suggested to Moscow that it has again backed the wrong horses. Meanwhile, Russia's domestic policies of repression and anticipation of what amounts to counter-revolution also betray fear, weakness, and an inability to transcend the status quo notwithstanding Medvedev's call for modernization. Should Russia or its neighbors experience their own version of the Arab spring, this elite determination to retain power and befriend tyrants as allies might lead Moscow to its own violent emulation of what is now a truly revolutionary and violent process in the Middle East.